

## **Wrigley Field**

Mark Biagi

*Brookwood Junior High School, Glenwood*

*Teacher: Harry Daley*

One of the most popular baseball parks ever made is Wrigley Field on the north side of Chicago.

Every year millions of people around America come to Chicago just to visit Wrigley Field.

Wrigley Field is also one of the most famous ballparks along with Fenway Park in Boston.

Wrigley Field was completed on March 14, 1914. It cost \$250,000 dollars. The original seating capacity of the stadium was 14,000. It was estimated that there were over 4,000 yards of soil and over 4 acres of bluegrass.

At the time it was built, it was not called Wrigley Field; it was called Weegham Park. The original dimensions at Weegham Park were 310 feet to left field, 440 feet to center field, and 356 feet to right field. The home team's name was also not the Chicago Cubs; they were referred to as the Chicago Whales and later as the Chicago Federals. At one point in 1915, the stadium was actually called Whales Park. At this time the team was also part of the Federal League.

The first major league game at Weegham Park was on April 23, 1914, when the Federals defeated Kansas City by a score of 9-1. The first homerun hit at Weegham Park was by the Federals catcher Art Johnson.

At the end of the 1915 season, the Federal League went bankrupt. But soon the Chicago team returned to Major League Baseball as the Chicago Cubs. The first National League game played at Weegham Park was on April 20, 1920, when the Cubs defeated the Cincinnati Reds 7-6 in 11 innings. From the 1920 season until the 1926 season the park was known as Cubs Park. After the 1922 season many renovations were completed on Cubs Park in the next two decades. In the 1922 season and the 1923 season, the grandstands were moved back 60 feet along and wooden bleachers were installed. These renovations increased the seating capacity from 14,000

to 20,000. In 1926, the park was named Wrigley Field, in dedication to the Cubs owner, William Wrigley Jr.

Renovations included double deck grandstands, lowered playing field, removal of the left field bleachers. In 1937, further renovations were done to Wrigley Field. The bleachers were added to the outfield and the famous 27 foot by 75 foot by 85 foot hand operated scoreboard was placed behind the bleachers in centerfield. The scoreboard signals for such notes as the hitter's number, the pitcher's number, the balls and strikes, number of outs, the inning, and a "H" or an "E". ("The "H" stands for hit and the "E" stands for error.) Although this scoreboard has been standing for 66 years nobody has ever hit a homerun off it. Roberto Clemente of the Pittsburgh Pirates and Bill Nicholson of the Cubs were the closest, but neither of them hit it. After every game at Wrigley Field a blue flag with an "L" on it or a white flag with a "W" on it is hung from the top of the scoreboard. The "W" means the Cubs won and an "L" means that the Cubs did not win. Atop the scoreboard is a huge 15-foot high clock. The clock is 15 feet in diameter and was added in 1941.

The most famous thing about Wrigley Field though is the ivy on the outfield wall. The ivy was bought and planted by Bill Veeck in 1937. The ivy was made up of 350 Japanese bittersweet plants and 200 Boston ivy plants.

One of the other most popular things about Wrigley Field is the bleachers in the outfield. The height of the bleachers is 11.5 feet and the height is 15 feet in the corners. The basket that hangs from the walls was added in 1970.

Wrigley Field has always been an advertisement free ballpark, and it was also the last ballpark to install lights. Wrigley Field was supposed to have their lights installed in the 1942 season, but, because of World War II, the owner of the Cubs donated them to the government.

For about the next 40 years Wrigley Field remained basically unchanged until in 1982 a message screen was installed underneath the scoreboard in centerfield, but the year before that the Cubs were bought by the Tribune Company. They began talking about installing lights after the 1981 season. However, a group of fans revolted against installing lights at Wrigley Field; so it was again postponed. In 1984, the Cubs made the playoffs and it was threatened that, if lights were not installed in future playoff games, that the Cubs games would be played at a different location.

On February 23, 1988, it was finally decided that lights would be installed at Wrigley Field. Ironically the first night game was rained out on August 8, 1988, when the Cubs were playing the Philadelphia Phillies. The first official night game played at Wrigley Field was the following night when the Cubs defeated the New York Mets 6-4.

After the Tribune Company bought the Cubs, many renovations of Wrigley Field followed. In the 1981-1982 season new office space was created behind home plate, in 1984 the Cubs' clubhouse was refurnished, as was the visitors' clubhouse in 1990. In 1989 more seating was added to the mezzanine level, and many other small renovations took place to make room for more seating. The present day Wrigley Field has a capacity of 38,902.

Wrigley Field has been the home of many memorable moments. The World Series was played in 1918, 1929, 1932, 1935, 1938, and 1945. The All Star Game was played at Wrigley Field in 1947, 1962, and in 1990. Wrigley Field is also the home of such moments as the 1917 pitching Duel between Jim Vaughn and Fred Toney, who both threw no hitters for 9 innings, Ruth's "called shot"

in the 1932 "World Series, "The Homer in the Gloamin'" when Gabby Hartnett hit a homer to lift the Cubs to the pennant, and when Pete Rose tied Ty Cobb for the most career hits at 4,191.

Wrigley Field is a very historic place. It has been said to be like Peter Pan, never growing up and never growing old. [From Wrigley Field, “Big Games at Wrigley Field,” [www.sportingnews.com/baseball/ballparks/wrigley.html](http://www.sportingnews.com/baseball/ballparks/wrigley.html) (Oct. 7, 2003); Wrigley Field, “Dimensions of Wrigley Field,” [www.mlbroadtrip.com/english/cities/major/nlc/chicagoparke.htm](http://www.mlbroadtrip.com/english/cities/major/nlc/chicagoparke.htm) (Oct. 8, 2003); Wrigley Field, “History of Wrigley Field,” [www.php.indiana.edu/~jgpyke/history.htm](http://www.php.indiana.edu/~jgpyke/history.htm) (Oct. 8, 2003); Wrigley Field, “Lights at Wrigley Field,” [www.members.tripod.com/franksballparks/wrigley.html](http://www.members.tripod.com/franksballparks/wrigley.html) (Oct. 7, 2003); Wrigley Field, “Memorable Moments of Wrigley Field,” [www.ballparksofbaseball.com/wrigleyfield](http://www.ballparksofbaseball.com/wrigleyfield) (Oct. 10, 2003); Wrigley Field, “Old Wrigley Field,” [www.123chicago.com/wrigley-field.htm](http://www.123chicago.com/wrigley-field.htm) (Oct. 8, 2003); Wrigley Field, “Technical Stuff About Wrigley Field,” <http://www.php.indiana.edu/~jgpyke/tech.htm> (Oct. 10, 2003); Wrigley Field, “Timeline of Wrigley Field,” [http://www.chicago.cubs.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/chc/ballpark/chc\\_ballpark\\_history.jsp](http://www.chicago.cubs.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/chc/ballpark/chc_ballpark_history.jsp) (Oct. 7, 2003).]